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PRESS RELEASE

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Maryland Man Sentenced to 90-Year Prison Term In 1999 Double Homicide - Man and Woman Were Fatally Shot While Seated in a Car -

WASHINGTON - Deandra Williams, 34, was sentenced today to 90 years in prison for the 1999 slayings of a man and a woman in Northwest Washington, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department, announced.

Williams, of Capitol Heights, Md., was convicted by a jury in October 2010 of first degree felony murder and related charges. The Honorable Michael L. Rankin sentenced him today in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

According to evidence presented at trial, at 10:50 p.m. on August 12, 1999, in the 1300 block of Hamilton Street NW, Williams approached a parked vehicle in which Duane Hicks and Passion McDowney were seated. Williams, while leaning with one hand on the vehicle and without warning, pulled out a revolver and opened fire on both victims. He then retrieved an unknown package from the vehicle and escaped. Hicks, 21, was pronounced dead within an hour of the shootings. McDowney, 24, died about 17 hours later.

Although a witness observed the events, the witness was unable to identify the shooter. However, evidence technicians lifted a palm print from the roof of the parked vehicle – directly over the right front passenger window through which the gunshots had been fired. A fingerprint identification specialist compared the palm print lifted from the roof of the vehicle to that of the defendant and concluded that the lifted print was from Williams's left hand.

Two days after the shootings, Williams was pursued by police following the report of an unrelated crime. During the chase, an officer noticed a silver-colored revolver fall from the defendant's waistband area. A firearms and tool-mark examiner compared the bullets recovered during the autopsies of the two victims to bullets fired from the defendant's revolver during a test-fire. The markings were insufficient to determine whether the defendant's pistol was actually the murder weapon, but the examiner determined that the revolver could not be excluded as the gun used in the shootings.

Williams was charged with the murders in 2001 and has been incarcerated ever since, serving a sentence on an unrelated robbery.

Williams's conviction is the latest in a series of successful prosecutions by the U.S. Attorney's Office of older homicide cases. In the past two years, working with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and other law enforcement partners, the office has obtained convictions in eight cases in which the murder took place at least eight years earlier.

"This case demonstrates the power of forensic evidence to hold murderers accountable long after they commit their crimes," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "Today's sentence for a double murder more than a decade old reflects our continued efforts to secure justice in long-unsolved cases."

"Fortunately, this defendant has been behind bars for a decade," said Police Chief Lanier. "No matter how much time has passed, criminals will pay for their crimes. I commend the members of the Metropolitan Police Department for their meticulous work on this case."

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen and Chief Lanier praised the work of MPD Criminal Investigation Division Detectives Daniel Whalen and Carlos Hilliard; Sgt. Joseph Bonner and Detective Collis Timlick, of the Fourth Police District; Sixth District Officer Larry Martin; Mobile Crime Lab Technicians Cynthia Brown, Anthony Lozado, Natasha Pettus, Dwayne Mitchell, David Murray and Nathaniel Covington; Fingerprint Identification Specialist Diane Glover, and Firearms and Tool-mark Examiner Lyndon Watkins.

U.S. Attorney Machen and Chief Lanier also praised Paralegal Alesha Matthews Yette, Victim/Witness Assistance Advocate Marcy Rinker, Litigation Technology Unit Specialists Kimberly Smith, Leif Hickling and Joshua Ellen, for their assistance during the prosecution of this case. Finally, they commended Assistant United States Attorneys Robert Little and John Cummings, who investigated and indicted the case, and Gary Wheeler, who handled the trial.